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Veteran Diplomat Carlucci Likely to Be Strongest Reagan National Security Aide

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WASHINGTON — Frank Carlucci, a tough veteran diplomat and former defense official, is likely to be the most powerful and influential national security adviser of the five to serve President Reagan.

The president yesterday announced that he had named Mr. Carlucci to succeed John Poindexter, who resigned last week in the storm over the sale of arms to Iran and the transfer of profits to the Nicaraguan anti-Communist Contra forces.

From the beginning, Mr. Carlucci is in a better position than his predecessor because his government experience is more extensive and his services are so greatly needed. To get Mr. Carlucci to take the job, the president promised him direct access to the Oval Office, according to a senior administration official.



Frank Carlucci

STAT That single act, officials say, ensures that the mandate of the national security adviser will be strengthened and that the influence over foreign policy of Chief of Staff Donald Regan will recede even further. Mr. Regan's position already has been considerably weakened by the Iran affair.

Mr. Carlucci will likely use his influence to shake up the National Security Council staff, replacing some members with allies from his days as deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency under President Carter, and deputy defense secretary during Mr. Reagan's first term, as well as an ambassador and a foreign service officer. He will also try to bring more order to a now chaotic foreign policy apparatus. And he'll try to regain quickly some momentum for the U.S. on the world stage for Mr. Reagan's final two years as president, to deflect attention from the continuing investigation of the Iran arms sale.

Mr. Carlucci, who is 56 years old, currently operates his own consulting firm and is chairman and chief executive officer of an ailing Sears, Roebuck & Co. subsidiary.

Mr. Carlucci has contacts throughout Washington and on Capitol Hill. He has a close relationship to Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of State George Shultz and CIA director William Casey.

"He's one who gets along with all three of them," says Kenneth Adelman, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and a longtime friend of Mr. Carlucci. But he added that he wouldn't defer to these men: "I've never seen Frank be shy. No one will be left out, but he won't hesitate to make his position known."

The selection of Mr. Carlucci for the National Security Council post is seen by many as a victory for Mr. Weinberger, who lobbied hard for his appointment, and as a defeat for Mr. Regan, who had supported William Hyland, Foreign Affairs Magazine editor and former National Security Council staff member. Speaking in Paris, where he was meeting with government officials, Mr. Weinberger said, "I'm delighted, couldn't think of a better appointment."

Sen. Richard Lugar (R., Ind.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, praised the appointment but suggested it must be followed by other replacements, including that of Mr. Regan and Mr. Casey. "There are enormous opportunities for the Reagan presidency in the next two years if the president continues to move in a timely manner to bring more new people into his administration," he said.

Rep. Dick Cheney (R., Wyo.), who was White House chief of staff under President Ford and is a friend of Mr. Carlucci, says the new national security adviser will take a low profile, in the style of President Ford's National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, as opposed to the style of Henry Kissinger, who held the post in the Nixon administration before becoming Secretary of State.

Mr. Carlucci's critics say that although he is a skilled bureaucratic infighter, he isn't an originator of programs or an efficient manager and that he sometimes seems overconcerned with secrecy, as evidenced by his support for lie-detector tests at the Pentagon.

Mr. Carlucci is leaving a battered business at Sears. He has been chairman and chief executive officer of Sears World Trade Inc., the smallest and weakest of the retail and financial-service company's

units. Wounded by the poor trade climate and its own inexperience, it never turned a quarterly profit. In October, Sears began taking steps under Mr. Carlucci's supervision to close the unit's domestic operations and to fold its international operations into Sears Roebuck's big merchandise group.

Mr. Carlucci's stint at the Pentagon brought mixed reviews. He took charge of the administration's efforts to revamp the Pentagon's weapons buying process, which came under scathing attack in Congress and the press with disclosures of overcharges and other irregularities.

The effort produced a set of new weapons-buying policies that became known collectively as the "Carlucci reforms." Mr. Carlucci left the department before they could be fully put in place. One Carlucci aide complained that the push was too much geared to creating an appearance of reform while those who were supposed to carry out the policies weren't allowed to push them through.

Mr. Carlucci has drawn scorn from the right for not being enough of a conservative and for his CIA service in the Carter administration at a time when—the right contends—the intelligence agency had been seriously weakened.

However, he won praise in other quarters for his actions while ambassador to Portugal in the mid-1970s. At that time he persuaded the White House to support a leftist government and the country's move toward democracy in opposition to then-Secretary of State Kissinger, who feared the demise of the right-wing dictatorship would lead to Communism.